

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) An outer surface-inspecting method for inspecting an outer surface of an inspection area having repeated patterns through comparison with a predetermined master pattern, said method, comprising:
dividing said inspection area having a rectangular shape into a plurality of matrix-like view areas[[,]] ;
~~using, as classifying a master pattern, according to mutually different standard pattern portions for~~ respective different edge shapes of said inspection area, into
~~contained in said divided view areas, said~~ nine standard pattern portions involving
~~said respective edge portions, four corner pattern portions each of which is applied~~
to a respective corner portion of the inspection area and has an L-shaped edge
shape, four side pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective side of the
inspection area and has a straight edge portion, and a central pattern portion without
having an edge portion of the inspection area;
moving each of the side pattern portions relative to the inspection view areas
along a peripheral portion of the inspection area having the repeated patterns
between respective corner pattern portions, so as to be applied to respective
matching inspection view areas of the peripheral portion;

applying the single central pattern portion to matching of each of the inspection view areas at a central portion for the central portion surrounded by each of the peripheral portions; and

inspecting the outer surface of the inspection area by comparing the standard pattern portions to the view areas corresponding to the classified standard pattern portions.

Claims 2-3. (Canceled)

4. (Original) The outer surface-inspecting method set forth in claim 1, wherein an object to be inspected is a semiconductor chip.

5. (Currently Amended) A master pattern to be used for comparison with an outer surface of an inspection area having repeated patterns for the purpose of inspecting said inspection area,

said master pattern comprising nine ~~a plurality of mutually different~~ standard pattern portions involving four corner pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective corner portion of the inspection area and has an L-shaped edge shape, four side pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective side of the inspection area and has a straight edge portion, and one central pattern portion without having an edge portion of the inspection area, according to ~~for respectively~~ different edge shapes of said inspection area contained in a plurality of matrix-like view areas, said view areas being obtained by dividing said inspection area in horizontal and vertical directions,

wherein the outer surface of the inspection area is to be inspected by comparing the standard pattern portions to the outer surfaces of the view areas corresponding to the respective standard pattern portions.

Claims 6-7. (Canceled)

8. (Original) The master pattern forth in claim 5, wherein an object to be inspected is a semiconductor chip.

9. (Currently Amended) An outer surface-inspecting apparatus used to inspect an outer surface of an inspection area having repeated patterns,

said outer surface-inspecting apparatus comprising a master pattern, said master pattern comprising ~~a plurality of mutually different~~ nine standard pattern portions involving four corner pattern portions each of which applied to a respective corner portion of the inspection area and has an L-shaped edge shape, four side pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective side of the inspection area and has a straight edge portion, and one central pattern portion without having an edge portion of the inspection area, according to ~~for respectively~~ different edge shapes of said inspection area having a rectangular shape contained in a plurality of matrix-like view areas, said view areas being obtained by dividing said inspection area,

wherein the outer surface of the inspection area is to be inspected by comparing the standard pattern portions to the outer surfaces of the view areas corresponding to the respective standard pattern portions.